

FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

December 18, 2007

Statement of Congressman Pete Stark
Supporting a New Direction in Energy Policy

MR. STARK: Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support increasing fuel efficiency and taking the first steps toward ending our costly addiction to fossil fuels.

The Energy Independence and Security Act (H.R. 6) will provide much needed increases in energy efficiency and investments in clean energy and green buildings. Most importantly, for the first time in a generation, this bill will raise the fuel economy (CAFE) standards for new cars and trucks. By increasing CAFE to 35 miles per gallon by 2020 this bill will reduce oil consumption by 1.1 million barrels a day in 2020. This is the equivalent of taking 28 million vehicles off the road. Although I believe we can and should get to 35 mpg faster, this bill represents real progress in our efforts to combat global warming and achieve energy independence.

It is no secret that our addiction to oil and coal is having increasingly dire consequences for our nation and the planet. The price of oil hovers near \$100 a barrel. An endless war continues to rage in Iraq while the President continues his saber rattling in the direction of Iran. The specter of catastrophic global warming becomes more real each day. The time to take action is now and this legislation is a good starting point, but we must do more. I agree with the numerous economists and environmentalists who think an aggressive carbon tax is the only sure way to make the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that are needed to reduce global warming. A carbon tax must be part of the conversation as we move forward with comprehensive global warming legislation.

This bill is not perfect. Republican obstructionists in the Senate have stripped provisions to mandate production of electricity from renewable sources like wind, solar, and biomass. They also demanded that giant oil companies maintain their preferential tax status. I am also troubled that we are continuing to subsidize and ratchet up production of corn-based ethanol, which will do little to ease global warming, but drives up food prices and contributes to water pollution. I hope that the environmental safeguards contained in the Renewable Fuel

Standard--which mandates production of 36 billion gallons of biofuels by 2022--will quickly push production away from corn ethanol and toward advanced cellulosic fuels. In the meantime, we have a responsibility to protect families hit by rising food prices.

Despite these shortcomings, this legislation represents real progress for both consumers and the environment. I urge all of my colleagues to embrace this new direction in energy policy and vote yes. We must realize that this bill is only the beginning and that more fundamental changes are needed if we are serious about addressing global warming and energy independence.